DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 172 CG 006 888

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TITLE The Student Personnel Worker as a Liaison Between the College Curriculum and Industry's Needs.
PUB DATE 70
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American College Personnel Association (St. Louis, Missouri, March, 1970); not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Articulation (Program); *Change Agents; College Students; *Counselor Role; Higher Education; *Industry; Jobs; Labor Market; *School Industry Relationship; Speeches; State of the Art Reviews; *Student Personnel Workers; Vocational Counseling

ABSTRACT

This paper speaks to the role of the student personnel worker in meeting the needs of the labor market while, concurrently, meeting the aspirations of those students with whom they work. Counselors need to have accurate information on available jobs, job descriptions, educational requirements for the jobs, opportunities for occupational mobility, and additional sources of information for interested students. (CKJ)

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The Student Personnel Worker as a Liaison between the College Curriculum and Industry's Needs

By James Benson Parks, Ph.D.

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An address given at The American College Personnel Association Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, March 17, 1970.

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The Student Personnel Worker as a Liaison between the College Curriculum and Industry's Needs

Madam Chairman, Fellow Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Although the decade of 1960's was filled with social upheavals, creation of additional educational institutions, and teaching innovations, little has been done to clearly delineate the duties of the student personnel worker. In part, this term includes a broad range of skills and activities that the professional is expected to perform as determined by the resources of the institution and the philosophy of its administrators. The result is that in few instances do the job duties of the student personnel worker reflect a congruency between the school curriculum and the needs of industry. Despite this lack of direction, most professionals perceive themselves as positive, intermediary catalytic student agents acting upon academic program and industry to fit the needs of their clients. This role of change agent requires that the worker be throughly knowledgeable in three areas, namely motivation and integration of personality and career selection, employers' demands and analyses of jobs and industries, and the interweaving of career guidance programs with the school and college curriculum.

Maslow's theory of motivation describes man as an organism which functions holistically and is compelled to action by drives, goals, or needs which may be conscious or unconscious. There is ample evidence that man is never satisfied but only temporarily satiated from a particular stimulus along his continuum of behavior. His behavioral pattern follows a hierachy of needs ranging from greatest prepotency to least as outlined by Maslow in the following manner:

Physiological needs
Safety needs
Needs for belongingness and love
Needs for self respect and esteem
Needs for self actualization

Assuming they have the resources and skills for satiation of the first three needs, then both the worker and his client actively seek to satisfy their needs for self-respect and self-actualization. In motivating his clients, the worker acts as a change agent and role model who provides them with opportunities for demonstrating leadership, accepting responsibility, and making pivotal decisions. Of course the worker considers what parts of the school curriculum are most suitable for blending with the students' environmental conditions when creating socio-academic developmental opportunities for them. These environmental conditions are familical, economic, political, and cultural activities of the students. Motivating the students requires the worker to be concerned with the integration of his client's personality and occupational goal.

The myriad pathways for securing a job and the numerous types of jobs greatly hinder the career selection process for high school and college age people in the United States. This becomes crystal clear when one realizes there are more than 25,000 jobs listed in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. To compound the problem, numerous jobs have two or three titles. Frequently the title under which the job is classified depends upon the industry which has need for that kind of work. For instance, biostatistician is the title given to a statistician working in the health industry, whereas actuary is the title for a statistician working in the life insurance industry. Upward mobility in the labor market can be direct, oblique, or scattergram depending upon the student's personality and versatility in skill which together comprise his ego identity.

In Erik H. Erikson's words, "Ego identity is the accured confidence that one's ability to maintain inner awareness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others." 1/ Ego identity includes then the integration of personality of the job aspirant and his career selection. This integration is vital in any structuring of the curriculum to fit the student's needs. Indeed the following measures are applicable for the understanding of this integration: 1) the culture, 2) student's perception of his

1/ Erikson, Erik H., Identity and the Life Cycle, New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1959.

culture, 3) student's analysis of the student, 5) objective assessment of the student's vocational skills using instruments standardized with ethnic samples representative of the students. The professional should work with both the academicians and the employers in establishing the criteria for selection and deselection of job candidates. False positive--false negative cut off points should be such that they guarantee maximum employment of people rather than employment of only the most capable. The personnel worker must be ever mindful of the following labor market factors when assisting the student in selecting a career: (A) Considerable variation of positions exist within jobs; (B) Jobs change from time to time dependent upon the nation's economy; (C) Great variation exist among people choosing a position as to skill, perception, and their evaluations of positions. Academicians, employers, and personnel workers are aware that the labor market in the United States in the 1970's will have an ever increasing number of skilled jobs and an ever decreasing number of unskilled jobs. Placement officials and political candidates, however, embracing the concept of <u>full employment</u> usually advocate that more people can become members of the labor force by merely increasing the educational levels of the unemployed. A question arises from this type of thinking, namely, Is education necessary for performance of the job or just for getting it? The assumption is that higher educational

achievements lead to increases in job performance and better qualitative job production. There are classic examples of armed forces personnel, insurance company employees, and chemical company employees where productive efficiency ratings vary <u>indirectly</u> with the educational levels of workers. Furthermore, levels of educational attainment do vary directly with employee turnover rates. Full employment or demands for labor are dependent upon the amount of business activity. The government has had at best only marginal success in attempting to reduce unemployment through operation of job corps centers, neighborhood youth corps, O. J. T. programs, and other anti-poverty programs. In evaluating any job, the personnel workers must get the following types of information: (A) Title of job and complete description of job duties; (B) Type of industry and list of locales offering this type of work; (C) The fringe benefits = salaries, bonuses, vacation time, sick time, pay, health insurance plans, stock options, etc.; (D) The uniforms, licenses, tools needed; (E) The <u>minimum</u> educational requirements; (F) The opportunities existing for laternal and upward job mobility as well as job trends--increasing or declining; (G) Where does one get additional information about the job?

It is estimated that between 7th grade and graduation from college, students will make 3 - 4 occupational choices. Molding of a career is a continuing developmental process which lasts throughout the majority of the person's life. The labor market is always in a state of flux due to creation of

some jobs, decline of others, and automative processing of things, data, or people = cybernetics. These three variables dictate that vocational guidance should be an integral part of the college curriculum, with the personnel worker acting as the chief architect for bridging interdisciplinary gaps as well as maintaining direct linkages between academia and the world of work. He should attempt to develop an effective guidance program that involves cooperation of teachers, community leaders, government officials, and company representatives. In fact this team should work with him in the structuring of any career day program.

The role of liaison between academic and industry is really three roles, namely: (1) catalytic agent for the student, (2) labor market analyst, (3) welder of the occupational world and academia. By developing decision-making experiences, career games, weekly staff career seminars, and industrial and educational visits, the professional worker enables students to acquire the skills necessary for maximum academic preparation for the manipulation of their vocational environment.

An address given at The American College Personnel Association Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, March 17, 1970.

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